

DT 933

Fisher, S.G.

F53

The American
Revolution
and
The Boer War

1902

DT 933

.F53

Copy 1

**The
American Revolution
and
The Boer War**

The American Revolution

and

The Boer War

An Open Letter to
Mr. Charles Francis Adams
on his Pamphlet
“The Confederacy and the Transvaal”

By

SYDNEY G. FISHER



Author of “Men, Women and Manners in Colonial Times”
“The Evolution of the Constitution”
“The True Benjamin Franklin,” etc.

(Reprinted from the *Philadelphia Sunday Times*
of January 19, 1902)

D.
J. H. C. P.
P. 1000
27 F '02

DT 933
F53

Ms. A. 9. 2. 4. 1. 3. 2.
[17]
PHILADELPHIA, January 14, 1902.

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS, ESQ.,
Boston, Massachusetts.

Dear Sir:

I have been handed a pamphlet written by you entitled "The Confederacy and the Transvaal," the burden of which is, that the Boers ought not to continue their irregular guerilla struggle against England, because it is destructive of themselves and wasteful of England's resources; or to use your own words "the contest drags wearily along, to the probable destruction of one of the combatants, to the great loss of the other, and, so far as can be seen, in utter disregard of the best interests of both."

You argue that the Boers, when their regular armies were defeated some considerable time ago, should have surrendered, given up the struggle, and not have resorted to a prolongation of the contest by guerilla methods. In support of this you cite the action of General Lee at the close of our civil war, when, his regularly organized army being completely defeated, he surrendered it, went quietly to his home and set an example, followed by the other southern leaders, of not prolonging the strife by those irregular methods which, as is well known, can be so very effective for a long period in a mountainous country like Switzerland or in a country of vast distances like the United States or South Africa.

In other words, you go so far as to say that when a people are fighting for their political integrity and independence, a hopeless struggle for it ought not to be prolonged beyond what may be called the point of scientific defeat. Rather than prolong it to desperation and death in the last ditch it is much better and more sensible to accept a dependent position of some sort, the position of a crown colony, or a charter colony with more or less varying degrees of colonial control, all of which your very unwise and altogether reckless great grandfather John Adams, and some of his friends used to describe as "political slavery."

This doctrine of the wrongfulness of a struggle for independence against overwhelming odds has appeared at times of late in the newspapers. I noticed that Mr. Bourke Cockran in his speech at the recent pro-Boer meeting in Chicago said, that the doctrine did not apply to the Boers because their heroism had now placed them in a position to win. He did not say positively whether or not he approved of such a doctrine. I am myself willing to pass by a great deal of approval of it. But when the attempt is made to render such an infamous doctrine respectable by affixing to it the honored name of Adams, a protest is in order from all those who are at all familiar with our own history.

I do not believe that our American people when their attention is really brought to the matter believe in any such doctrine. But their attention is not usually brought to it. We have been by our stupendous power far removed for a long time from the possibility of such a struggle. We are accustomed to the business method of settling serious disputes by yielding at once to overwhelming power; by acquiescing in the vote of the majority or the will of the richer man or clique that has bought up all the stock. When the political boss informs our corporation that the legislation we want passed must be paid for we pay without resorting to guerilla or any other tactics. When one holds the cards that will take all the remaining tricks he usually shows his hand saying, "the rest are mine," and everybody assents.

But circumstances alter cases and all cases are not alike. If your doctrine is of universal application the ravisher who presents himself with overwhelming force must always be gently accepted without resistance to save time and avoid danger and expense. If the European powers, disgusted with the success of our protective tariff and rising commercial supremacy, should unite to abolish our lynch law, burning of negroes at the stake, municipal corruption and some other matters, their armies and fleets would outnumber us even more than the English outnumber the Boers; and I suppose if you are really as much of a "quitter" as you profess to be you would then still preach your doctrine of submission.

When you look closely at the matter and try to fix the point of scientific defeat in the Boer war I do not know why you should place it at the fall of Pretoria or whatever moment you decide upon for the defeat of the regularly organized armies. I should say it was just as well placed before the fighting began when England showed her cards; a population of 30,000,000, without counting the population of the colonies, against a population that does not number 2,000,000 counting the Cape Colony rebels; an army of 250,000 regulars against 40,000 militia.

If your doctrine is sound political morality, it applied then, and in the face of such stupendous odds, I should say, rather more than it does now.

But I prefer to be guided somewhat in these matters by your great grandfather, John Adams, for whom I have always had a great fancy. If you will pardon me for saying so I think that his attention was more closely and intensely directed to these matters than yours has ever been. His neck was at stake as well as your own valuable existence and reputation. The British statute of that time provided a terrible punishment for what he was doing. Possibly you have never read it.

"That the offender be drawn to the gallows, and not be carried or walk; that he be hanged by the neck, and then cut down alive; that his entrails be taken and burnt while he is yet alive; that his head be cut off; that his body be divided into four parts; that his head and quarters be at the king's disposal."

The disposal the king was accustomed to make of the heads and quarters of such people was to have the quarters hung about in conspicuous parts of London like quarters of beef; and the heads were set up on poles on Temple Bar or London Bridge to rot as a ghastly warning.

I am inclined to think that the opinion of a man who from 1765 to 1780 worked with that enactment hanging over his head is worth considering. I find on picking up the first life of him that comes to hand, that he was anything but blind to the consequences. England had shown her hand. She outnumbered the colonists four to one; and, in the same proportion, she could send a disciplined army against their undisciplined militia and guerilla forces.

It was even worse than that. The colonists were not united in resisting England; not nearly so unanimous as the Boers are. It was by no means certain that our colonial rebel party had a bare majority. The loyalists insisted and believed that they themselves had the majority. So if we cut off from the supposed 3,000,000 population of the colonies the black slaves who numbered about 800,000 and the loyalists who were even more numerous, we had at the utmost only about 1,400,000 whites who were prepared to resist the army, fleet, and 8,000,000 population of England without counting nearly a million loyalists in their own midst.

In fact on the showing of hands it was an utterly hopeless contest, and within a few years proved itself to be such. All that saved your ancestor's party from complete annihilation was the assistance after 1778 of the French army, fleet, provisions, clothes and loans of money followed by assistance from Spain, and at the last moment by the alliance of Holland. And even with all this assistance your ancestor's cause was even as late as the year 1780 generally believed to be a hopeless one.

Your ancestor did not like the prospect. He was fully prepared for misery, beggary and his family blood attainted and rendered infamous to the last generation by the English law. Death was the least thing he dreaded.

"I go mourning in my heart all the day long," he writes to his wife, "though I say nothing. I am melancholy for the public and anxious for my family. As for myself a frock and trousers, a hoe and a spade would do for my remaining days."

"I feel unutterable anxiety," he writes again. "God grant us wisdom and fortitude! Should the opposition be suppressed, should this country submit, what infamy, what ruin, God forbid! Death in any form is less terrible."

"There is one ugly reflection," he says in a letter to Joseph Warren. "Brutus and Cassius were conquered and slain, Hampden died in the field, Sidney on the scaffold, Harrington in jail. This is cold comfort." (Morse's Adams, pp. 54, 60.)

Your ancestor had still other difficulties to face of which it may be well to remind you. Long before actual fighting began in our revolution the rebel party, or perhaps I should say, the rougher elements of it, created by means of

tar and feathers and other methods, a reign of terror throughout the whole country. They went about in parties taking weapons of all kinds out of loyalists' houses, although they have since put a clause in the National and all state constitutions that "the right to keep and bear arms shall never be infringed." Those documents also without exception, I believe, contain a clause guaranteeing freedom of speech and of the press; but the rebel party of your ancestor extinguished completely and utterly both of these rights; so completely that Rivington, the principal publisher of loyalist pamphlets, fled for his life to a British man-of-war; and loyalists scarcely dared refer to politics even indirectly in private letters.

If the loyalists were really a majority, as they professed to be, the rebels were determined to break them up. Loyalists were ridden and tossed on fence rails, gagged and bound for days at a time, stoned, fastened in rooms with a fire and the chimney stopped on top, advertised as public enemies so that they would be cut off from all dealings with their neighbors; they had bullets shot into their bedrooms, their horses poisoned or mutilated; money or valuable plate extorted from them to save them from violence and on pretence of taking security for their good behavior; their houses and ships were burnt; they were compelled to pay the guards who watched them in their houses; and when carted about for the mob to stare at and abuse they were compelled to pay something at every town. For the three months of July, August and September of the year 1774, one can find in the American Archives alone, over thirty descriptions of outrages of this kind.

In short, lynch law prevailed for many years during the revolution, and the habit became so fixed that we have never given it up. As has been recently shown the term lynch law originated during the revolution and was taken from the name of the brother of the man who founded Lynchburgh in Virginia.

The revolution was not by any means the pretty social event that the ladies of the so-called patriotic societies suppose it to have been. It was on the contrary a rank and

riotous rebellion against the long established authority of a nation which had saved us from France, built us up into prosperity and if she were ruling us to-day would, I am entirely willing to admit, abolish lynch law, negro burning, municipal and state legislative corruption and all the other evils about which reformers fret.

But feeling that we were a naturally separated people, the rebel party among us insisted that we had the inalienable right to rule ourselves. We were seized with the spirit of independence, or as the people of your way of thinking at that time called it "a chimera of patriotism." Against this natural and inalienable right no authority, we declared, no matter how meritorious and venerable need be respected.

The Boers, though receiving far greater provocation than we received, have behaved much better. They have not tarred and feathered Englishmen as we did or ridden them on rails, or suffocated them with smoke, or burnt their houses or hazed or tortured them in any way. Their conduct in the whole war has been most fair, honorable and meritorious, showing the high character of their intelligence and morals and their superiority to the British.

In our revolution, wherever the rebel party were most successful with their reign of terror they drove all the judges from the bench and abolished the courts; and for a long time there were no courts or public administration of the law in many of the colonies, notably in New England.

To people of the loyalist turn of mind all these lynching proceedings were an irrefragable proof, not only that the rebel party were wicked, but that their ideas of independence, of a country free from British control and British law, were ridiculous, silly delusions, dangerous to all good order and civilization. That such people could ever govern a country of their own and have in it that thing they were howling so much about, "liberty," was in their opinion beyond the bounds of intelligent belief.

These lynching proceedings, the loyalists said, increased the loyalist party very fast and made them sure of a majority. I shall not discuss that question. But there is no doubt that many rebels went over to the loyalist side; and

many others who did not actually go over were shaken in their faith and hardly knew what to think. Your ancestor belonged to the party who did all this lynching and inaugurated the reign of terror and he has himself told us how it staggered him. The prospect of raising such men as the lynchers to power by a revolution was a serious matter. A man one day congratulated him on the anarchy, the mob violence, the insults to judges, the closing of the courts and the tar and feathers which the patriots and their congress were producing.

"Oh Mr. Adams, what great things have you and your colleagues done for us! We can never be grateful enough to you. There are no courts of justice now in this province, and I hope there never will be another."

For once in his life your ancestor could not reply.

"Is this the object for which I have been contending, said I to myself; for I rode along without any answer to this wretch. Are these the sentiments of such people, and how many of them are there in the country? Half the nation for what I know; for half the nation are debtors, if not more; and these have been in all countries the sentiments of debtors. If the power of the country should get into such hands, and there is great danger that it will, to what purpose have we sacrificed our time, health and everything else?" (Works of John Adams, Vol. II, p. 420.)

I have made these lengthy statements and quotations for the sake of reminding you that the man who was responsible for your existence and also very largely for the existence of the revolution, faced with his eyes open the very state of affairs which you say should in conscience and good morals compel a man to surrender and give up. He faced a far worse state of affairs than the Boers face, and he had less excuse for his conduct.

He, however, did not follow your advice; and one reason may have been that his wife, whose blood is also in your veins, would have despised him if he had. I need not quote those beautiful letters of hers which are in print, in which she declares not only her own unalterable affection, but her willingness, to go down with him to disaster and poverty and labor with her hands. Among all the men of that time I do not know of one who was more uncompromising, more obstinate, more determined as President Kruger

put it, to make Great Britain "pay a price that would stagger humanity," or according to your own theory, more immoral, than your own great grandfather and his wife.

During the seven years fighting of the revolution Great Britain sent out peace commissioners and kept offering terms which steadily increased in liberality, entire freedom from taxation, in fact almost everything the rebel colonists had demanded, up even to a sort of semi-independence. Your great grandfather voted down everyone of them. He attended with Franklin the famous peace meeting with Lord Howe on Staten Island and rejected Lord Howe's terms. And why? Because none of them contained the one essential condition, absolute independence. Your great grandfather was a Kruger.

But let us pass from him. Let us see what others thought and what was the general situation during the revolution.

At the very beginning of that contest our forces were of an irregular and guerilla character. The farmers, who attacked the British regulars at Lexington and followed them back to Boston picking them off from behind stone fences and trees, were the most irregular fighters it is possible to imagine. They were not acting under the authority of any legitimate or even a *de facto* government. They were not even officered, directed or authorized by the rebel Continental Congress, which had met the year before in Philadelphia. They were acting in a purely voluntary manner in obedience to a mere sentiment of that faction of the colonists who resented an invasion from Great Britain and wanted this country for their own. They were acting in the same manner and on the same sentiment by which the Boers now act and which you say is a crime.

It is very important to remember that the moral position of the Boers is vastly stronger than was ours. Before the present Boer war began the Boers were two independent nations whose independence had been acknowledged by England on two or three different occasions and in two or three different documents. We were not independent and never had been. We were colonies and some of our com-

munities were not even charter colonies; they were crown colonies; and one of the charter colonies, Pennsylvania, had a clause in its charter acknowledging the right of parliament to tax as it pleased. Our revolution was an out and out rebellion against legitimate control because we wanted to govern ourselves; because we did not want to be governed by people who lived three thousand miles away in another and far separated country; because we did not want to be taxed by the outsider; because we did not want him to maintain an army amongst us to keep us in order, because we did not want him to regulate our commerce or our manufacturing industries; because in short, we wanted to keep house for ourselves and believed that the colonial position was at its best essentially a degradation to manhood or as we called it at that time "political slavery." If the Boers are wrong in defending against England by guerilla methods an independence long since acknowledged, then we were ten thousand times wrong in supporting by the same methods a rebellion for independence against that same country which it is said can rule any people better than those people can rule themselves.

The Boers at the beginning of the present war had the regularly organized armies of an independent nation. With the money obtained from the gold mines they had bought the most modern artillery, small arms and ammunition. We on the other hand being mere rebels had none of these things. Our guns were at first antiquated or blacksmith-made muskets and shot guns; and we were the ridicule of the British regulars because we had no bayonets. Whenever we had a chance we used the superior weapons taken from British prisoners just as the Boers now use the Lee-Metford rifles taken from their prisoners. We never were decently armed until France sent us shiploads of guns and ammunition. Many of the straps and cartouche boxes worn by our people had the British army letters G. R. stamped on them. Graydon relates in his memoirs how when he was taken prisoner a cartouche box with those letters on it was instantly wrenched with violence off his person.

As our first meeting in arms with the British was irregular so was our second. Bunker Hill was so much of a guerilla battle so far as we were concerned that it is disputed to this day whether Putnam or Prescott was in command. As a matter of fact there was nobody in particular in command. It was a voluntary sort of affair; and the description of it reads exactly like a Boer battle.

About fifteen hundred men, mostly farmers like the Boers, suddenly seized an important hill or kopje dangerously close to the British lines. They fortified themselves with breast works made of fence rails and hay in such a bucolic manner that all the regulars in Boston laughed. They could have been defeated very easily by sending a force on their flank and rear. But General Gage thought that would be ridiculous and unnecessary. A force of three thousand regulars could easily by a front attack sweep off these farmers, show them the uselessness of their methods, and possibly end the rebellion at once.

You know the rest. But it must be very shocking to a person of your views to remember that the old Queen Anne muskets, shot guns and duck guns which your forefathers in such bad taste and contrary to all military science, levelled over those fence rails and hay at your friends the British in beautiful uniforms, were loaded with buckshot, slugs, old nails, and bits of iron from the blacksmith shops. That was our Majuba Hill, our Spion Kop.

Let us move along still farther. The New England farmers for all the rest of the summer, autumn and following winter formed themselves into a most vulgar and absurd army and surrounded Boston, shutting in the British. The minds of those farmers were full almost to fanaticism of the principle of equality and the rights of man, "the leveling principles" as they were then called which now form the foundation of our American life. The officers among them were merely leaders and persuaders. It was not an uncommon sight to see a colonel shaving one of his own men. The men served a few weeks and then went home to get in the hay or see how their wives were getting on, and others came from the farms to take their places. In this

way the army was kept up. Those who went home were very apt to take their powder and musket with them to shoot squirrels on the farm.

A year later at New York our army was the same guerilla force and I shall let Captain Graydon describe it :

"The appearance of things was not much calculated to excite sanguine expectations in the mind of a sober observer. Great numbers of people were indeed to be seen and those who are not accustomed to the sight of bodies under arms are always prone to exaggerate them. But the propensity to swell the mass, has not an equal tendency to convert it into soldiery; and the irregularity, want of discipline, bad arms, and defective equipment in all respects, of this multitudinous assemblage, gave no favorable impression of its prowess. The materials of which the eastern battalions were composed, were apparently the same as those of which I had seen so unpromising a specimen at Lake George. I speak particularly of the officers who were in no single respect distinguishable from the men, other than in the colored cockades, which for this very purpose had been prescribed in general orders; a different color being assigned to the officers of each grade. So far from aiming at a deportment which might raise them above their privates and thence prompt them to due respect and obedience to their commands, the object was, by humility, to preserve the existing blessing of equality, an illustrious instance of which was given by Colonel Putnam, the chief engineer of the army, and no less a personage than the nephew of the major-general of that name. 'What,' says a person meeting him one day with a piece of meat in his hand, 'carrying home your rations yourself, colonel!' 'Yes,' says he, 'and I do it to set the officers a good example.'"

(Graydon's Memoirs, edition of 1846, p. 147.)

We have grown into a habit of depicting all our revolutionary forefathers, both privates and officers, in beautiful buff and blue uniform as if we were from the start a regularly organized, independent nation, fighting regular battles with another independent nation. There were, I believe, at times a select few, more usually officers, who succeeded in having such a uniform. But the great mass of our rebel troops had no uniforms at all. They wore a hunting shirt or smock frock which was merely a cheap cotton shirt belted round the waist and with the ends hanging outside over the hips instead of being tucked into the trousers. Into the loose bosom of this garment above the belt could be stuffed bread, pork, and all sorts of articles including a frying pan.

We of course do not like to have a picture of one of our ancestors painted in such a garment. It would not look

well. It is better to have some theoretical uniform, the uniform that our fathers would have had if they had had the money and time to get one, painted on top of a picture of our ancestor.

Lafayette has described in his memoirs the rebel army he found in this country on his arrival in the summer of 1777:

"Eleven thousand men, but tolerably armed and still worse clad, presented a singular spectacle in their parti-colored and often naked state; the best dresses were hunting shirts of brown linen. Their tactics were equally irregular. They were arranged without regard to size except that the smallest men were the front rank."

When the French officers appeared among us after the alliance, our officers were often unable to entertain them for lack of decent clothes and food. Washington in an order of July 24, 1776, said:

"The general, sensible of the difficulty and expense of providing clothes of almost any kind for the troops, feels an unwillingness to recommend, much more to order any kind of uniform; but as it is absolutely necessary that men should have clothes and appear decent and tight, he earnestly encourages the use of hunting shirts with long breeches made of the same cloth, gaiter fashion about the legs to all those yet unprovided." (Force 5th Series, Vol 1, pp. 676, 677.)

That was the sort of army Washington commanded; an army to which he could seldom give orders but only recommendations and suggestions. It often melted away before his eyes without any power on his part to stop desertion. At New York in 1776 he collected as you know by the utmost exertion about 18,000 men, but so afflicted with camp fevers and disease that only 14,000 of them were effective, and these were more of a rabble than an army. At the battle of Long Island and other engagements round New York they were easily beaten by General Howe's huge army of 34,000, and as is generally believed could have been annihilated or exterminated if that general had chosen to do so. As it was they were so broken up and scattered that they disappeared to their homes, and Washington fled across New Jersey and crossed the Delaware with only 3,300 men.

The Continental Congress fled from Philadelphia. It was a migrating congress for many a day afterwards;

travelling from one place of refuge to another with its little printing press and papers carried in a wagon.

If you had been living in those days you would have said that the rebellion had now certainly reached the point of scientific defeat and should be abandoned and all hope of independence given up. Thousands of people at that time said so. The loyalists of course said so; and many who had been rebels, or had been watching to see if the rebellion had any chance at all, now turned against it and took the British oath of allegiance. That is unquestionably what you would have done if you had been living at that time with your present opinions. Your great grandfather however was not of that mind, nor was Washington.

In fact, Washington prepared to become the worst kind of a guerilla; and you will find his letter on the subject in the second volume of Irving's life of him, chapter XLI. In case of being further pressed he said, "We must then retire to Augusta county, in Virginia. Numbers will repair to us for safety and we will then try a predatory war. If overpowered we must cross the Allegheny mountains."

What do you think of that? What a wicked man he must have been. He intended to abandon the seaboard colonies, taking with him all the rebels who would follow him; and a great many including your ancestor would have to follow him, for if they remained behind they would be hung. He proposed a "grand trek" to get away from those British who are said to govern so well, just as the Boers "treked" away from them into the deserts of South Africa nearly a hundred years ago, because they did not fancy what they had experienced of that supposed excellent government.

Having secured a refuge for the rebel congress and his followers on the edge of what was then the Western Wilderness, Washington proposes to maintain himself there by what he calls "predatory war," and I suppose you know what that is. If unsuccessful in that, he intended to cross the Allegheny mountains and plunge into that vast unknown region with the Indians and the buffaloes, which stretched away 3,000 miles to the Pacific ocean. There, assisted by the great distances he could play havoc with an invading British

force; cut their slender communications and their cordons of blockhouses as the Boers are doing to-day in South Africa.

This last resort of the rebel colonists was so obvious that it was often discussed not only in the colonies but in England. It was greatly feared by the tory ministry, because it might indefinitely prolong the war. The whigs prophesied disaster from it; and Burke in one of his speeches refers to it in an eloquent passage in which he describes the rebel colonists retreating to that vast interior of fertile plains where they would grow into marvels of hardihood and desperation; how they would become myriads of American Tartars and pour down a fierce and irresistible cavalry upon the narrow strip of sea coast, sweeping before them "your governors, your councillors, your collectors and comptrollers and all the slaves that adhere to them."

In other words the tories dreaded what not so very long afterwards they accomplished in South Africa. They forced the Boers out of Cape Colony and they went by the grand trek into the interior plains where they founded two fierce and free republics, such as Washington might very readily have founded west of the Alleghenies. A turn of the hand, the failure of the French Alliance might have placed the United States in a position somewhat similar to that of South Africa or to that of Ireland if you like. The effect of British brutal and stupid violence on a high strung and independence-loving people will always be very much the same everywhere.

But to return to Washington's letter. You very likely read it when as a young man you read Irving's life of him; but it never occurred to you to think that his "predatory" and guerilla war was wicked. It was on your side; you believed that his desire for the independence of the country was just and right, and being so, could be rightfully supported by predatory as well as regular warfare. Your youthful instinct was sound. You had not then learned to worship mere financeering. You had not then imbibed a passion for that part of the British constitution which declares that any resistance whether in support of independ-

ence, home or anything else which interferes with the operations of a financial clique in London is a crime.

But when you see the principles and tactics of Washington and your own great grandfather repeated in a country far off they seem different, and when you see them turned against a country which gradually has come to embody in your mind fashionable society, you think them very dreadful. From your great grandfather's time to yours is a very short distance in history but a long distance, it seems, in political morals.

The proposition for which you contend, or for which you profess to contend, for I decline to believe that anyone of your name really accepts such stuff, is nothing but the old principle of the bully and brute. The little man must yield where his case is shown to be hopeless and save the brute's time and money. After every battle of the revolution the British and the loyalists thought that your ancestor and his friends ought to give it up, and this went on for over seven years in spite of the assistance of France.

I am inclined to think that if you were really put to the test you would not live up to your own principles. I am inclined to think that if I and several others, outnumbering you in the proportion of the English to the Boers, should present revolvers and say that being men of better business capacity we would now kindly take charge of your private affairs and manage them for you to your great advantage, you would not act quite as piously as you preach. The one or two drops of the blood of old John, which are still hidden in your veins, somewhere down in your boots, would suddenly rush to your heart and inflame it. You would duck under those revolver muzzles and come at our stomachs in a way that would keep us moving. We should undoubtedly very soon have your dead body with which to conduct some sort of brutal and stupid British triumph; but we should never be able to say that we had made a political slave of a living Adams.

I have not space here to take you all through the revolution and remind you of every scene in which your ancestor figured. But I shall finish what I was saying about

Washington when his army was reduced to 3,300 and he was prepared for a grand trek to the Alleghenies. He did not have to resort to that because General Howe did not press him any further. For political reasons, which we cannot go into here, Howe preferred that Washington should raise another army if he could.

Howe retired to New York and spent the winter there with his large force of 30,000; but at Trenton and Bordentown on the Delaware River some fifty miles away he placed two isolated outposts of about 1,500 Hessians each. Washington collected more men until his 3,300 had become 6,000 and with these raw militia he gobbled up those Hessian outposts just as the Boers have been gobbling up similarly placed British outposts. When a force of 8,000 British came out from New York to reoccupy Trenton, Washington cut in behind them, and at Princeton, finding some more British coming up widely separated and unable to support one another, he beat them in detail.

This was brilliant, irregular Boer warfare on outposts and weak detachments. Washington was able to do it because his whole system was like that of the Boers, an irregular one. If he had had a regularly organized army and it had been reduced down to 3,300 it would never have been brought together again. He would have been done for. But his army was always one of the come and go kind. He had a small nucleus that could be relied upon to stay; but most of his force was composed of men who came from all parts of the colonies to serve three weeks, three months or six months then return home and have others come in their places. It was by this Boer method that all the armies of the rebel party during the revolution were kept going. When seriously defeated or when they had accomplished an object they would scatter as the Boers do and make it very difficult to destroy that which did not exist.

Now that we have settled down and become a great nation all this seems like very foolish business to some of us who cut off coupons or sit at roll top desks endorsing the backs of documents until we have lost the natural feeling of vigorous manhood so characteristic of the Boers and the

followers of Washington. We have forgotten our revolution. Our own acts in it now seem too heroic for our stomachs when we see others practicing them. Ireland has been practicing similar methods against England for hundreds of years. It may be a foolish game, but it can be made a very long one. It has lasted some seven hundred years in Ireland without success on either side. It lasted some thirty years in Cuba and was successful and we have set the seal of our approval on that success.

I shall now restore to your recollection the famous Duché letter which was written in the autumn of 1777. Duché was a brilliant young clergyman of the Church of England and was settled in Philadelphia. He was inclined to take sides with the rebel colonists, and would have been very glad to see them attain what they wished if it could have been done peaceably and in the manner of ordinary business negotiations; and he was even willing to go a little farther than this and have the rebel colonists make a certain amount of armed resistance up to a certain point, not beyond the bounds of good taste. In short he was very much of your professed way of thinking, and he represented a large class of people who were of that way of thinking. At the meeting of the first Continental Congress he opened the session with a prayer so eloquent and suitable that it attracted universal attention, and gave him at once a political standing of some little importance.

But after three years of Boer tactics, irregular methods, hopelessness, evident failure, the rise into power of men who were not gentlemen, petty speculation and fraud in the rebel army, apparent deterioration in character of the men in the rebel congress, the undignified runaway, wandering habit of that congress with its papers hauled from one refuge to another in a wagon, and similar things which make a deep impression on men of a certain kind of education and refinement, he saw so clearly the unutterable folly and wickedness of the attempt at independence that he could stand it no longer.

There were many others who thought just as he did; but they usually either went to live in England or Canada

or kept quiet in semi-concealment waiting until the power of Britain should restore order and good government to the colonies. But Duché, feeling that he was in somewhat of a public position, argued out the whole subject in a long letter to General Washington, calling on him in the name of God and humanity to put an end to the frightful state of affairs so mutually destructive to the best interests of both the colonies and England.

He was horrified he said to find that rather than give up the idol independence the rebels "would deluge this country in blood." In short he was horrified at the Krugerism of Washington who intended to make England "pay a price that would stagger humanity." As to the rebel army its existence depended on one man. Most of its officers were from "the lowest of the people." "Take away those who surround your person, how few are there that you can ask to sit at your table." The rebels had hoped for aid from France; but after three years of waiting it had not come and there were no signs of it. The whig party in England was growing smaller. The whole English nation, "all orders and ranks of men are now unanimous and determined to risk their all on the contest."

"Under so many discouraging circumstances, can virtue, can honor, can the love of your country prompt you to persevere. Humanity itself (and sure I am humanity is no stranger to your breast) calls upon you to desist. Your army must perish for want of common necessities, or thousands of innocent families must perish to support them. Wherever they encamp the country must be impoverished. Wherever they march the troops of Britain will pursue and must complete the devastation which America herself has begun."

"Perhaps it may be said, 'it is better to die than to be slaves.' This indeed is a splendid maxim in theory; and perhaps in some instances, may be found experimentally true. But where there is the least probability of a happy accommodation surely wisdom and humanity call for some sacrifices to be made to prevent inevitable destruction."

It reads almost as if you had written it yourself, does it not? It raised the whole question fairly and squarely, the whole question of the moral right of a naturally separated people to struggle for independence to the bitter end, the last ditch, extermination or whatever name you choose to give it, or as in the case of Ireland, the Armenians and the Poles without end.

I do not mean to say that that was the only time that Washington had had the question brought squarely before him. It was a question that came up all over the country every day for seven years down to within a few months of the surrender of Cornwallis in 1781; for the year 1780 was as you know the darkest hour in our revolution. Every individual in those seven years had that question before him every day and hour, and as individuals settled it for themselves one way or the other they dropped in and out of the two sides of the contest.

How did Washington settle it with Duché? The young clergyman made a powerful appeal to him. He said that the whole solution of the war rested with Washington alone. He alone could stop the fighting. He alone could persuade the other leaders in the name of God and humanity to give up a hopeless contest. This was somewhat of an exaggeration. The war was deeper than Washington just as the Boer war is deeper than Kruger. But never mind that. Duché's idea was that Washington should at the head of his army negotiate for some settlement short of independence. Independence, England would never grant.

Awful and wicked as it now no doubt seems to you, Washington declined this honor. He sent Duché's letter to the wandering congress. It was copied and given a wide publicity. Your ancestor and the men of that time never dodged the question raised by that letter. Washington also sent a copy to Duché's brother-in-law, Francis Hopkinson, and if you want to read a stinging letter I can recommend the letter Hopkinson wrote to his perverted relative. The whole correspondence including Duché's letter is printed in the appendix to the edition of 1846 of Graydon's *Memoirs*. I shall quote just one passage from Hopkinson's letter:

"The whole force of the reasoning," he says to Duché, "contained in your letter tends to this point: that virtue and honor require us to stand by truth, as long as it can be done with safety, but that her cause may be abandoned on the approach of danger; or in other words, that the justice of the American cause ought to be squared by the success of her arms."

The moral or principle contained in that passage is repudiated by you and by every one who lives in England;

by the Russians also, most of the Germans, many Frenchmen and in fact Europe generally. If you fear numbers you do well, no doubt, in repudiating it. But it was on that moral principle that our revolution was put through. Whoever denies that principle denies the United States, denies our foundation principle and our validity, denies the justice and righteousness of the struggles which created Switzerland, and all the South American republics including Cuba, struggles which are still carried on by the Armenians after seven hundred years of failure and by the Irish for the same period, struggles which in fact, originally created England, France, Germany and all the powers which now affect to despise them, struggles which create nationalities and all that is useful, honorable or valuable in civil or political life. When you deny the right of a naturally separated people to struggle without end for independence, you deny the most fundamental and necessary, the most powerful and far reaching, the most scientific and well settled principle of moral conduct that history has disclosed.

I do not wish to take up too much space accumulating instances in our revolutionary history, but Franklin's conduct is perhaps worth considering. He was not what is called an enthusiast or fanatic. He was on the contrary one of the shrewd calculating kind. He had full knowledge of all the conditions. He resided in England as agent of Massachusetts and of the rebel cause in general from 1764 to 1775. It cannot be said that he did not know the power and merit of England. He admired the English political system. He was very fond of English life and preferred a residence among learned and cultivated people in England to one in America. Under these influences he at first believed that the colonists should submit after trying ordinary peaceful and so-called legal measures. In a word Franklin was at first of your opinion.

But when he returned to America in 1775 and the spirit or influence of independence touched him he became the most unrelenting, obstinate and as you would say unreasoning, fanatical and blind stickler for absolute and unqualified independence at any price or at the price of extermination.

The Continental Congress of which your ancestor was a member was, as late as the year 1780, so determined to keep up the struggle although in that year it was regarded as hopeless, that they arranged to have pictures prepared with short descriptions of what they considered British atrocities, but which were the milk of human kindness compared with Kitchener's Spanish concentration camps and other benevolences inflicted on the Boers. These pictures and descriptions were to be shown and taught to every American rebel child forever so as to burn into their minds eternal hatred and a struggle without end against the independence hating British brute.

Just at the close of the revolution Franklin was preparing to have thirty-five of these pictures designed and engraved in France "in order," as he wrote to an Englishman, "to impress the minds of children and posterity with a deep sense of your bloody and insatiable malice and wickedness." If Franklin could apply such adjectives to England's comparatively mild attempts to suppress a rebellion, what would he say to-day of her worse than inhuman efforts to destroy two independent nations. Franklin believed that the success of our revolution had destroyed forever the inherent cruelty and despotic brutishness of the English tory. But the tory has gone on developing; and even the English liberal has less of the courage, intelligence and character which were such a brilliant and saving grace to him in the days of Burke, Chatham and Barré.

I shall now consider what you say about the action of General Lee and the leaders of the confederacy. You assume that they were struggling for independence; and that is most extraordinary. It is an insult, as it seems to me, to the intelligence of the whole American people. I never before heard our civil war described in that way. That Lee or the confederacy were struggling for independence in the sense in which the American colonists of 1776; or the Boers of to-day or the Swiss or the Irish struggled for that object I most positively deny. If Lee and the confederacy had been struggling in that sense the civil war would not yet be over. The eleven southern states would be now either independent or in the condition of Ireland.

First of all the southern states were not a naturally separate people. They were contiguous territory. There was no natural boundary dividing them from the North. They were of the same race, language and social status as the north. They had taken part with the north in making the whole country independent of England and with the north they had made the National Constitution.

They had quarrelled with the north simply about the question of slavery. At one time they had disapproved of slavery in the abstract as much as the north did; but as their slaves were more profitable than slaves in the north they were slower about abolishing slavery than the north had been. Their slaves were guaranteed to them by the Constitution. The rising moral sentiment against slavery in the north, which seemed to them to threaten the abolition of slavery in the south by violence without regard to the Constitution and without compensation to owners drove them into war. Their confederacy which they formed was a mere make-shift to protect millions of dollars worth of slaves. There is no evidence of any passion for independence among them, such as has characterized the people already described, and as a matter of fact there was nothing in their unseparated situation that would cause that passion.

High strung, intelligent men such as the southerners are, will fight a long time over millions of dollars worth of slaves, if they think they are to be suddenly and unfairly deprived of them, but not as they would fight for independence, for political existence. There was so little moral righteousness in slavery and they had always known so well its unrighteousness that when the point of scientific defeat was reached, when their regularly organized armies were formally defeated they gave up the game. The inspiration of the cause was not perennial. There was none of the eternal justness in it which inspired the cause of Washington and your ancestor, which has kept the Cubans struggling for thirty years, and the Irish and the Armenians for seven hundred.

General Lee, who, as you say, set the example of giving

up, was a man of peculiar views on the civil war. He was not a believer in slavery. He described it as a "moral and political evil" and "a greater evil to the white than to the colored race." He did not even believe in the right of secession. He spoke of it as an absurdity, and said that it was impossible to suppose that the framers of the Constitution could have contemplated anything of the sort. He had great misgivings and much mental struggle when Virginia seceded and he finally decided to go with his state because as he put it, "I have not been able to make up my mind to raise my hand against my relatives, my children, my home." He cared little or nothing for the confederacy. It was the invasion of Virginia against which he fought and he always commanded the army in Virginia. "Save in defence of my native state" he said, "I hope I may never be called on to draw my sword."

Such a man easily dropped the contest for the confederacy when the point of scientific defeat had been reached. He fought to acquit his own honor as a man fights a duel until blood is drawn, and that done he has no more incentive for fighting.

There is also another point you have forgotten. The terms which General Grant offered Lee were of a liberality beyond the capacity of any British general or statesman. Lee's whole army was paroled and told to go home taking their horses with them to cultivate their farms. There were to be no punishments or executions for treason. Afterwards when some people in the north foolishly clamored for punishment, Grant sternly insisted on the fulfillment of every condition in the surrender. Under such terms it was very easy and natural for Lee to ride quietly from the surrender to his own home, walk in and shut the door, and never trouble himself about the rebellion again.

You say Lee's example influenced the other southern leaders. But it was Grant's example, the fair and honorable terms, which were the real influence, the real power that was accomplishing this result. It was very American and possible only among Americans. The English are too stupidly violent ever to achieve such a result as that.

You may remember that some months ago Botha and some of the Boer leaders met Lord Kitchener to discuss terms of peace. And what were the British terms? Compare them with Grant's. Lord Kitchener said that immunity would be given to certain of the leaders, but no immunity could be promised to certain others. Could honorable men consent to surrender themselves and escape on condition that certain of their associates were to be hung?

Suppose Grant had said to Lee, "You and your officers, if you will surrender, shall be guaranteed immunity; but Jefferson Davis, and Johnston and Beauregard are to be hung." Do you suppose Lee would have surrendered? I am inclined to think that if any such British policy had been carried out there would be guerilla war and Irish rebellion in the south to this hour.

Lord Kitchener, you will also remember, would give the Boers no promise of local self-government. It was indefinitely postponed. They asked him about giving the right to vote to the black Kaffir population. But Kitchener refused to give any promise on that point.

In other words they were asked to surrender without any agreement that the lives of the rebels in Cape Colony who had been assisting them should be spared the gallows, they had no definite promise of local self-government, and so far was the possibility of self-government removed that it was left uncertain whether or not the black Kaffir population would not be used to control them and outvote them if a sham of self-government were set up.

Now let us suppose Grant offering similar terms to Lee. Let us suppose him saying that the eleven states of the confederacy would be held as crown colonies, or presidential subject colonies for an indefinite period, and that the north reserved the right to control the south by means of giving the vote to the recently freed black slaves and withholding it from the whites. Do we not all know what Lee's answer and what the answer of the whole south would have been to those terms?

We all know what happened a few years afterwards in the reconstruction period when the blacks were to a certain

extent put over the whites. We all know that the south immediately turned to guerilla methods or as they were called the Ku Klux societies, societies of secret assassination and terror, methods far worse than ordinary guerillism. Moreover these Ku Klux methods were successful. They broke the dominion of the black man. They compelled the north to stop, to recall its carpet baggers, to reconsider its injustice; or as Mr. Page puts it the southerners reconquered their own country, and had it again under their own normal state governments. But if Lee and the other southern leaders had known all this was coming they would have begun the guerillaism at Appomatox.

The Ku Klux methods were unpleasant, atrocious, unfortunate in many ways; for as most of us can remember, they fixed upon southern life the habit of assassination, which continued for many years in a manner most revolting and shocking to northern moral sense and it has only recently begun to die out. But who was to blame? England has in the same way turned the Irish into assassins, rioters and law breakers, and then cries out that they are barbarous and uncivilized and must be "coerced" and forced into more assassination, rioting and law breaking. I place the blame where it belongs; and I venture to predict that if England continues her inhuman, morally degrading and worse than Irish policy with the Boers she will turn them into a race of assassins or law breakers. They are now the very reverse of that. They have shown a higher regard for the sacredness of human life than we have to-day in America. They have shown more self-restraint, more respect for personal rights, have dealt more fairly with their opponents than we did in our revolution. They are the superiors of both ourselves and the English and they are inferior to us and the English only in numbers.

There is a great deal of talk of England's success in ruling dependencies. She rules no doubt successfully enough over the servile, over toadies, flunkies and weaklings or those who have no spirit or love of independence. Wherever she has attempted to rule an independence-loving people as in the case of the Irish, ourselves or the Boers,

she has made a most shocking failure of it. Few people trouble themselves to read the long history of England's dealings with the South Africans for nearly a hundred years previous to the present war. It is all detailed in Theal's admirable volumes of the history of South Africa. Theal was himself an Englishman, an official in South Africa, and he prints all documents in full. I must confess I was astonished to read this long record of atrocious injustice, inhumanity, stupidity and cruelty which generation after generation has hammered the Boers into a separate people, given them a long list of martyrs and anniversaries of ferocity and built up in them a fell hatred of the English, which now astonishes men like yourself, who suppose this to be a mere sudden outbreak, and who have not the time, or will not take the trouble, to investigate the long chain of causes which led up to it.

With an independence loving people England has only two methods of success, extermination or banishment. She always rules with complete success over the dead. When with Martinis and Lee Metfords she has slaughtered over 27,000 black or brown men, carrying spears or old-fashioned guns, with a loss on her side of only 387, and with a vast crop of medals and Victoria crosses for the supposed heroes of this supposed wonderful victory, she has unquestionably solved a "problem" in her way.

When, after 700 years of conquests, "colonization," reform bills, final settlements, coercion acts, land acts, hangings, confiscations, corruptions, treachery and broken promises, a large part of the native Irish are living in the United States, where by their steadiness, industry, bright minds and success they contradict and disprove every charge and statement made against them by pottering English statesmen, England may undoubtedly be said to have successfully solved the problem of her "white man's burden" so far as concerns these Irish in the United States.

As to those who remain in Ireland we again hear of coercion, are told that there is to be some more legislation for them which is to be a "final settlement." An Englishman has just written a book to prove that all settlements with

such people as the Boers and the Irish should be "finalities" and settle the question. This, he says, is very important.

I notice also that some Irish representatives arrived the other day in New York to collect from Irish-Americans subscriptions in money to enable them to discuss this "final settlement," which has been progressing for 700 years without arousing the least sense of humor in any Englishman whom I ever knew or heard of.

I know however of one settlement which is supposed to have been final. It was a document signed in Paris in the year 1783, by an Englishman whose name is of no importance, but the persons who signed on the other side were Franklin, Adams and Jay. I am wrong to call this a final settlement. It gave us only independence on the land. England still ruled us on the ocean where she searched our ships as she pleased and claimed a suzerainty over us as she has claimed a suzerainty over the Boers, and for the same contemptible purpose, to enable her to watch her chance to destroy our independence.

We remained semi-independent until 1812 when we fought what used to be called the Second War for Independence. There were a great many people in your part of the country who thought we ought not to fight that war. They used your argument. They said what is the use? It will waste money and destroy valuable property, both English and American. What is the use of fighting for a mere sentiment? Let us be governed by sense rather than sentiment. Let us be content with the substantial advantage and the liberty we already have rather than risk it all, and our material interests besides. And you carried this argument so far that you threatened to secede from the Union.

England had secret emissaries here at that time to encourage secession and dissolution in the hope that at any rate she could turn New England and possibly the Middle States into dependencies again. A few years afterwards in our Civil War, she again did her utmost to dismember us; and she would to-day seize with eagerness any similar opportunity. She never gives up her purpose to destroy the political manhood of any people.

If she had the courage of her convictions and intentions and was not afraid of the outcry of the civilized world, she would be much shorter and quicker in her work with the Boers. She would surround the concentration camps of Boer women and children with machine guns and pump into the mass of humanity until that heroic race was extinct. But she prefers the safer and more veiled, but equally infamous, method of slow starvation and disease, of banishment and imprisonment in distant countries to extinguish a race which she hates because she knows she has always done them evil and wrong and because they excel her own people in morals, military intelligence and courage.

She hated our love of independence as she hated Ireland's and it was merely an accident that she did not make of us an Ireland. When she deals with an independence-loving people she makes of them either an Ireland or a United States. And that is the question in South Africa. Shall there be an Ireland in South Africa or a United States of South Africa?

It is most dismal to read of Englishmen suggesting for the Boers the same old methods that were used in Ireland, "colonization," stamping out the native language, stamping out the love of independence, banishment, depriving of weapons, the greatest severity, no mercy. The Irish were deprived of their weapons, even of their shot guns. They were forbidden to have carving knives above a certain length or horses above a certain value. They were "colonized" and their lands taken away from them and given to Englishmen over and over again, in exactly the same manner that Cecil Rhoads now recommends for the Boers. Measures to exterminate their language and their Roman Catholic religion were taken over and over again and were of such relentless severity that no reasonable man could doubt that both the language and the religion would disappear within a generation.

Cromwell went among them with scythes, bullets and Bibles and the war cry of his soldiers was "Jesus and no quarter." The town of Drogheda surrendered to him on his promise that their lives should be spared.

"But no sooner had they laid down their arms than Cromwell took back his word and slaughtered every man, woman and child in the city, so that five days are said to have been spent in this ghastly massacre. At Wexford the same miserable scenes of treachery and butchery were enacted." (Gregg's Irish History, p. 64.)

Very few educated people in this country read Irish history. It is a sort of forbidden subject. It might reveal too much. From what I have read of it I am free to say that for stupid injustice, blind, unreasoning, brutal cruelty, treachery and corruption on the part of England from about the middle of the 12th century down to to-night it equals if it does not exceed in atrocity the rule of the Spaniard in South America.

Yet all the wicked things that the atrocity was intended to exterminate are still alive and possibly stronger than they were in the twelfth century. Roman Catholicism is as strong as ever, the language still lives, and there has been a special revival of it within the last two years. The most wonderful part of all is that the Irishman is still alive, still an Irishman with children and grandchildren. He still loves his country, still loves independence and home rule, is still carrying on what you call guerilla tactics; and this very summer made a special outburst of guerillaism in the British parliament itself in the very heart of London.

What does all this show? Simply that the spirit of independence, the natural nation-forming instinct of human beings, when once aroused, is usually inextinguishable except by the annihilation of every individual; and that this is a provision of nature for the formation of human societies in the world. Secondly that men will fight longer and more desperately for justice or against injustice than they will fight for money.

It has been the consciousness of eternal justice that has kept the Irish and Armenians going for seven hundred years, that inspired the Netherlands to resist the Spaniard for eighty years, that kept your ancestor fighting for seven years and determined Washington to resort to "predatory" war rather than yield to the "benevolence and good government" of England.

Justice is far superior to philanthropy, charity, "the white man's burden" or any other pious hypocrisy or fraud that the villainy of man has invented. It is more important than, and it must precede both morals and good government. After you have been just to a people you may begin to preach to them. Good government as well as agricultural, commercial and industrial prosperity, have been rendered impossible in Ireland for centuries because there has been no justice to the native and patriotic party among the people. Justice can purify most of the international horrors of the world far better than "benevolence."

We are on the whole more just than other nations. We founded ourselves upon justice, upon the doctrine that a naturally separated people had a right to their independence, that all men were politically equal and equal before the law, and that no government could be just that did not rest on the consent of the governed. These doctrines are the highest development of justice that has been wrought out in the past and by that great movement called the Reformation. But England has never accepted them.

We have taught England many things. The dread of our influence compelled her to give the Canadian French liberal institutions. Any rights the Canadians, the Australians or the East Indians enjoy are the result of our revolution and the Sepoy Mutiny. Without our example the English lower classes would still be serfs. Real liberty and free government, the rights of the laboring man, have grown during the last century in England out of American precept and example.

We have compelled her to enlarge her elective franchise towards universal suffrage. Only a few years ago there were no cheap newspapers in England. No reform journals or periodicals favoring popular rights, could be started because there was a tax on the paper, a tax on the advertisements and a tax on each copy of the journal, so levied and manipulated that the tory aristocracy could kill at their pleasure any popular journalistic enterprise. But the example of free and cheap newspapers in America, under the guidance of a Gladstone, extinguished those taxes and from

that time dates the development of popular rights in England. In the same way has England been compelled to adopt our system of the secret ballot in place of her method which placed every tenant at the mercy of the landlord and every mill hand at the mercy of the mill owner. She is now struggling in a comical way to adopt our public school system. It remains for us to teach her to be just to the Boers.

With the greatest esteem for your distinguished ancestor and yourself, I have the honor to remain,

Very truly yours,

SYDNEY G. FISHER.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 019 920 712 A



Made by George D. Buchanan and
Company at the Sign of the Ivy
Leaf in Library Street Philadelphia

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 019 920 712 A

Hollinger
pH 8.5
Mill Run F03-2245